

E Is for English

Online English learning helps cut costs, increase employee productivity, and improve organizational effectiveness. | **By Deepak Desai**



ONE OF THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL KEYS to organizational success in any enterprise is communication. In a world where multilingual workforces, partnerships, and customer bases are industry norms, this need has become even more critical. Inaccuracies in business communication

can have consequences that range from the minor to the catastrophic; minimizing that margin of error increases productivity and the likelihood of successful outcomes in everything from daily e-mail exchanges to high-level negotiations.

English is the global language of business, and online solutions for developing English communication skills can offer companies rapid results to meet the unique demands of 21st century business without breaking the bank—an absolute must in today's tough economic climate.

Online programs can be quickly deployed and easily scaled from 10 to 10,000 users. In addition, online programs offer 24/7 connectivity, from any location, with on-demand access to content, translation tools, writing templates, and other productivity resources so learners can integrate and apply their learning on the job.

Personalization enables content to be tailored to individual proficiency levels, goals, and different learning paces, which ultimately leads to better, faster results. And a single, consistent solution implemented globally allows for meaningful measurement and tracking of individual performance across the enterprise.

Case Studies: ArcelorMittal & Deloitte

When Mittal Steel merged with Arcelor to form the world's largest

steel company, the integration of new people, new ideas, and new cultures presented a new challenge. Though English is the company's official corporate language, fewer than 15 percent of its 326,000 employees are native English speakers. Improving corporate English proficiency became a strategic imperative to ensure a successful integration of the two organizations and facilitate future growth. Through ArcelorMittal University, the company implemented an online business English development solution and has realized an annual productivity gain of \$16 million while reducing training costs by 75 percent.

Nearly all participants indicate what they are learning is relevant to their work, and 89 percent have applied what they've learned on the job. Participants overwhelmingly report they are better able to understand and produce documents and participate in meetings, conferences, and telephone calls. Employees who before could not be considered for global projects now can be tapped for their particular knowledge and experience.

Companies moving into emerging markets can particularly benefit from the early deployment of online business English development solutions to get a head start on a successful integration. Between 2000 and 2008, Deloitte quadrupled its number of employees and grew into new markets in Asia and South America. To encourage clear and efficient communication between its global teams, the company declared English to be its official language and implemented a classroom-based English training program. When the poorly attended sessions yielded no quantifiable results, Deloitte adopted an online business English learning initiative to provide instant, on-the-job training and support to learners at all levels of competency throughout the company's worldwide workforce. By consolidating several locally positioned classroom-based vendors into one online solution, Deloitte saved money while streamlining operations.

In fact, learners report an average gain of 3.5 hours each week in increased productivity. The convenience of online learning has resulted in greater user participation and significantly increased the program's ROI. And since English training is a desirable employee development offering in many global organizations, Deloitte is able to attract better candidates, reduce recruiting costs, and increase job retention. <e>

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